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SUBJECT: MAJORITY LEADER HOYER'S VISIT TO DENMARK

11. (SBU) Summary. Prospects for U.S. climate and energy legislation and its potential impact on an international climate agreement in December were foremost in the minds of Danish interlocutors as House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer visited Copenhagen May 26 - 29. Hoyer, in meetings with senior Danish government and parliamentary leaders, emphasized that the new administration and congress both want a climate deal, but cautioned the Danes to not set expectations too high. Hoyer's visit was also an important opportunity to solicit Danish views on a broad range of other issues, including Afghanistan, the Middle East, Guantanamo detainees, and it provided a chance to thank the Danes, and particularly the Danish parliament, for their close partnership with the U.S. in Afghanistan and in addressing other global challenges. End Summary.

12. (SBU) House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer visited Copenhagen May 26 - 29 at the invitation of the Speaker of the Danish Parliament (Folketing), Thor Pedersen. Hoyer was accompanied by Senior Foreign Policy Advisor Mariah Sixkiller and Deputy Director for Floor Operations Austin Burnes. During the visit Hoyer met with Danish Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen, Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller, Climate and Energy Minister Connie Hedegaard, and the leadership of the Folketing, and other senior parliamentary leaders. The Majority Leader also had an audience with Queen Margrethe II.

13. (SBU) Hoyer was warmly welcomed by Folketing Speaker Pedersen and the parliament's senior leadership, or presidium. Pedersen thanked Hoyer for having welcomed many Danish parliamentarians in Washington and noted that it was a pleasure to return the favor in Copenhagen. Hoyer thanked Pedersen for Denmark's close friendship with the United States in general and in particular expressed appreciation for Danish engagement in Afghanistan. Danish soldiers, Hoyer noted, had seen tough fighting in Afghanistan's southern Helmand Province and had suffered, on a per capita basis, some of the highest casualty rates among ISAF partners. Hoyer thanked the presidium for the broad political backing that underpinned the Danish deployment, and noted the importance of maintaining that support.

14. (SBU) Danish Climate and Energy Minister Connie Hedegaard's focus was on prospects for U.S. legislation that could provide a U.S. mandate for negotiations at December's international climate summit in December (COP-15), which Denmark will host. Hedegaard hoped that U.S. legislation would be "aggressive," and she asked for Hoyer's assessment of key deadlines and potential roadblocks. Hoyer, noting the recent launch of legislation by the House's Committee on Energy and Environment, said that he hoped to see the House pass final climate and energy legislation by July. Hoyer cautioned that any U.S. climate bill would inevitably reflect a complex series of political compromises resulting from committee reviews not only in the House but in the Senate as well.

15. (SBU) The result of those compromises might produce outcomes less ambitious than the Danes or others might like, particularly in regard to reductions in U.S. CO2 emissions. However, Hoyer continued, it was his sense that Congress and the administration were working to produce a "serious" package that would allow the U.S. to arrive in Copenhagen in December ready to contribute positively to a deal. Hedegaard also reinforced that U.S. leadership was critical in helping get China to support an agreement. Hoyer noted that Speaker Pelosi was visiting China even as Hedegaard and Hoyer were meeting, and that the administration had

just selected a "real heavyweight" as the prospective U.S. ambassador to China.

¶6. (SBU) Hoyer's meeting with Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller reinforced themes on climate legislation and Afghanistan, and also focused on the broader Middle East. Moeller stressed the importance of reaching a global climate agreement in Copenhagen in December. Hoyer thanked Moeller for Denmark's engagement in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Both agreed on the importance of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Moeller claiming credit as "one of the authors" of the two-state "roadmap." Moeller also emphasized the importance of engaging Syria, both to encourage resumption of a separate negotiating track with the Israelis and to counter Iranian meddling in the region. Hoyer expressed skepticism regarding Syria's willingness and ability to pursue a separate peace with Israel; Moeller admitted such a goal might still be remote, but he nevertheless felt it important to engage Syrian leadership.

¶7. (SBU) Majority Leader Hoyer's meeting with Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen also centered broadly on climate issues, with the PM also hoping for strong congressional leadership that would provide the U.S. administration with a solid negotiating mandate. Rasmussen also praised the Major Economies Forum, calling it a "very useful vehicle" for advancing negotiations. Hoyer told Rasmussen that Congress had a difficult road ahead, and that there was still significant resistance in both some Republican and Democratic circles to specific aspects of a climate and energy bill, particularly those aspects regarding costs. Most U.S. legislators would find the energy independence and security components of the bill easier to back, Hoyer explained. On the other hand, CO2 reduction, and debates regarding cap and trade and auction versus allocation of emissions credits were more contentious. It would take many compromises to put together legislative majorities in the

House and Senate. Hoyer also reminded Rasmussen that climate and energy legislation was only one of several difficult issues being address in the new Congress, with economic recovery, health care and education all competing for attention and resources.

¶8. (SBU) Hoyer asked Rasmussen about health care, noting that Denmark's system was one that relied predominantly on the state to fund and provide care, but that the Danish system also allowed for private health care providers. Could the PM offer advice as Congress looked at this issue? Rasmussen said it was important to maintain some aspects of competition in the system, both to encourage effectiveness and to ease bottlenecks where the public system at times might not be able to offer care within a reasonable timeframe. Rasmussen also underlined the Danish system's emphasis on prevention, and the government's efforts to improve communication between general practitioners and hospitals.

¶9. (SBU) Hoyer and Rasmussen also briefly touched on Guantanamo detainees and whether the Danes might be willing to accept any. Rasmussen welcomed the new administration's commitment to close Guantanamo, and said that Denmark wanted to work with other European partners to try to assist. That said, Rasmussen said Denmark would be unlikely to accept detainees. First, Danish legislation would not allow it. But, even assuming a change in legislation, Denmark felt that its efforts in Afghanistan, and its full participation in ISAF combat and civilian operations, led Denmark to conclude that others "who are not pulling their weight" should take detainees first. Hoyer also inquired about Danish reaction to North Korea's recent nuclear test, which Rasmussen strongly condemned. Hoyer also encouraged Danish and European engagement with Russia. In particular, Hoyer stressed that Rasmussen, as a new and relatively young European prime minister, would be well-positioned to reach out to Russian president Medvedev, whom Hoyer suggested would at some point distance himself from Putin and come into his own as a leader.

¶10. (SBU) Comment. Majority Leader Hoyer was warmly welcomed by Danish parliamentarians and was able to engage with a broad spectrum of party and committee leaders. In addition to his meeting with the Folketing's Presidium, the Majority Leader also delivered a well-received speech to approximately 100 Folketing members, praising Denmark's consistent championing of human and political rights. A separate lunch with Social Democratic Party leader Helle Thorning-Schmidt was another opportunity to discuss the politics of

a climate agreement, seem from the perspective of the Danish opposition. Finally, the Majority Leader was also granted an audience with Denmark's Queen Margrethe II. Hoyer's Danish ancestry resonated deeply with his interlocutors here, and many Danish parliamentarians noted with gratitude that Hoyer's door was always open when they visited Washington.

¶11. (SBU) Comment continued. The Majority Leader's visit was also important and helpful in injecting a healthy dose of realism into what have been at times very high Danish expectations for U.S. actions in support of a global climate agreement. At the same time, Hoyer clearly noted that both Congress and the administration were committed to serious and sustained efforts to reach a deal in Copenhagen in December. Secondly, and just as importantly, Hoyer was effective and gracious in conveying to Danish parliamentarians that Denmark's efforts in Afghanistan were both noticed and valued by its U.S. ally. While the USG has had several senior administration officials in Copenhagen over the past year who shared similar messages, the Majority Leader was the senior-most congressional official to visit Copenhagen in many years, and his engagement with Danish parliamentarians will help ensure that both the Danish and U.S. governments can continue to count on broad Folketing support for Danish engagement in Afghanistan.

¶12. (U) Majority Leader Hoyer's office has cleared this message.
McCulley